ABSTRACT
        The implementation and effectiveness of the inclusion of
literacy and numeracy in industry training packages was examined in a case
study that focused on the use the horticulture industry training package in
South Australia. Data were gathered from the following activities: a
literature review; consultations with stakeholders in the package's
development or delivery; 5 weeks of observations of the interaction between 1
trainer and 11 trainees; surveys of an unspecified number of selected
trainers and the 11 trainees; and 15-minute interviews with 6 trainees, a
trainer, and the training package coordinator. The following were among the
main findings: (1) although literacy and numeracy information kits have been
developed and disseminated by the Australian National Training Authority, use
of the kits is not widespread; (2) literacy and numeracy competencies are
generally buried in the training packages; (3) poor literacy and numeracy
skills may inhibit successful completion of training package units; (4) more
articulation arrangements with higher education are needed; and (5) links

between trainers, workplace assessors, and worksites must be strengthened to support the intent of the training package model. (The bibliography lists 15 references. The interview questions, student questionnaire, and staff questionnaire are appended.) (MN)

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Executive Summary

This project is one of six major projects being conducted through the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Australian Research Consortium (ALNARC). The six participating centres have designed an integrated research process to investigate the ways in which the inclusion of literacy and numeracy competencies, now incorporated into competency standards in Training Packages, are impacting upon training and assessment in industry training.

ALNARC (South Australia) has worked with this broad brief to examine Training Package delivery in a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) working in the field of agriculture and horticulture. The research revealed findings in three broad areas and within each is a cluster of recommendations.

1. Good practice in the delivery and/or assessment of Training Packages. Recommendations concern:
    *   the development of good assessment practice
    *   the development and maintenance of quality Training Packages delivery

2. Literacy and numeracy levels and practices used in delivery. Recommendations concern:
    *   the visibility of literacy and numeracy competencies within the Training Package units of competence
    *   the provision of learning support for trainees
    *   the provision of professional development for trainers

3. Access and equity issues relating to delivery. Recommendations concern
    *   strengthening institutional pathways into Training Package programs
    *   supporting articulation across the Australian Qualifications Framework

Background to the research

'Training Packages are a result of a 1996 government initiative aimed towards increasing the skill level of Australia's workforce', (Rural Training Council of Australia 1999, 1). This initiative is in turn, referenced against the introduction of a competency based vocational education and training system, in 1989, the active endorsement of industry based competency standards, in 1990, and the strategic directions for vocational education and training spearheaded from 1992 by the Australian National Training Authority. The Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) sought to incorporate language, literacy and numeracy into Training Packages using the National Reporting System (Coates *et al.,* 1994) as a comprehensive reference point for language, literacy and numeracy competencies.

The first Training Packages were endorsed in July 1997, by the National Training Framework Committee (established July 1996). In October of 1998 this Committee agreed to a staged, transitional approach to developing Training Package advice. A Training Package is 'a consistent and reliable set of nationally endorsed components for training, recognising and assessing people's skills' (ANTA 1999, 3). The Training Package itself consists of two components, endorsed and non-endorsed. The endorsed or mandatory section has three parts:

- National competency standards
  These standards describe work skills.
- Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)
  The framework presents clusters of competency standards that constitute a specific qualification.
- Assessment guidelines
  Assessment guidelines provide information about who can assess against competency guidelines and how.

There are also non-endorsed components to Training Packages. The non-endorsed component for the Agriculture and Horticulture Industry has seven components. These are learning guides, career guides, competency record books, trainer's guides, national horticulture and agriculture modules, assessment instruments and learning resources.

The key to Training Package delivery is the assessment of industry standards, or competency standards, gained predominantly in a workplace

context through multiple means and not linked to a prescribed curriculum. Assessment of outcomes is undertaken by assessors using the following modules from the *Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training (BSZ98):*

- BSZ401A Plan Assessment
- BSZ402A Conduct Assessment
- BSZ403A Review Assessment.

These outcomes are tied together in a nationally recognised structure that facilitates the achievement of national vocational qualifications. The delivery of Training Packages rests with an RTO that has the capacity to deliver all or part of a specific industry Training Package.

In South Australia, ALNARC conducted extensive consultations to select a site for investigation and eventually settled on an RTO site delivering the Horticulture Training Package. The site selected for this study is cautiously optimistic about the change from curriculum to Training Packages. This partnership has continued the collaboration between the Agriculture & Horticulture Training Council's Project Officer, Nadeya Maystrenko, who is responsible for literacy and numeracy training within the ITAB, and a group of researchers in the language, literacy and numeracy research unit at the University of South Australia.

The Horticulture Training Package investigated in this study, for example, does not require a structure for the delivery of training. Training has shifted from 'old paradigm' delivery (Rural Training Council of Australia, 1999) that is curriculum based, to the 'new paradigm' encompassed within the Training Package model. 'Training is about inputs, but Training Packages focus on outcomes. They set out standards and describe ways of measuring and recognising an individual's competency' (Rural Training Council of Australia, 1999). Given this 'new paradigm' for training (Rural Training Council of Australia 1999, 6) Training Packages in the horticulture industry emphasise customer service, workplace communications and working as a team. The packages themselves have been developed with a strong commercial and business focus following a need to support the idea of the business of horticulture.

Refining the research focus in South Australia

The process of establishing research sites at a time when the Training Packages themselves were being established across RTOs was problematic. An obvious need was to work with a training organisation that had been using the Training Packages for a period of at least six months. This narrowed the research possibilities.

ALNARC (SA) established a process to engage key informants within the fields of both workplace literacy and workplace training. This process was broad based and involved:

1. Discussions with industry and training bodies (April/July, 1999).
2. A literature search relating to Training Packages (incorporating a web search) (April/December, 1999).
3. The formation of an Advisory Group (May 1999).
4. Consolidation of the state based project within the framework of the five other projects being undertaken by the Consortium (June 1999).

The formation of an Advisory Group for the project was instrumental in assisting the South Australian Centre to determine a specific research focus. An early meeting with the Advisory Group opened a discussion as to research focus and design. The following key points were raised during discussions and the research team was asked to consider the issues during project implementation:

*   ascertain what Training Packages were to be endorsed by June 1999
*   recognise that professional development of trainers is a key issue in development and delivery
*   consider the implementation of Framing the Future initiatives, specifically research funded through WELL
*   the need to canvass all stakeholders in the establishment, delivery and outcomes of Training Packages
*   continue to maintain the importance of literacy and numeracy competencies within Training Package delivery
*   ensure that historical links in the development and presentation of the Training Packages are considered

Research design

In brief the Project aimed to explore and document the effects of the inclusion of literacy and numeracy in industry Training Packages by documenting experiences across management, trainer and trainee locations.

To understand how Training Package implementation currently works at the point of delivery, the research aimed to provide a snapshot of teaching and learning as it is experienced in the delivery of specific modules from the Horticulture Industry Training Package. The way in which literacy and numeracy are included in Training Packages was documented through observation of delivery in the selected RTO. To broaden the possibility of gaining a clear picture of how the literacy and numeracy competencies impact in delivery of Training Packages, data collection relied on multiple methods. These methods included discussions and interviews with key stakeholders, direct observation of delivery and the administration of a questionnaire to all trainees and trainers in the study.

Questions guiding the study

Overall the research was designed as a qualitative case study of inclusion and implementation across the levels of management, trainers and trainees involved in the program. It was thus necessary to focus research activity across a number of levels of RTO activity related to Training Package delivery. Such levels included management, teaching and learning and administrative functions of the RTO and its related ITAB. A number of questions assisted in collecting data across these sites.

Research focus: inclusion of literacy and numeracy in Training Packages

- What concerns and practices in relation to the inclusion of literacy and numeracy competencies in Training Packages exist for training body and training organisation managers and coordinators in the implementation process?

Research focus: instruction under the Training Package model

- How is literacy and numeracy understood by research informants?
- What literacy and numeracy practices are evident in the learning environment?
- What opportunities for contextualised literacy and numeracy have been made available with the Training Package model and how have these opportunities been utilised in the learning environment?
- What professional development is needed and has been made available for trainers at this point in the implementation process?
- What resources are needed and have been made available for trainers at this point in the implementation process?

Ancillary research questions

- How are the literacy and numeracy competencies integrated into this specific training package for this group of learners?
- What delivery methods do instructors employ to support the learning of trainees?
- How do learners receive/engage with this learning?
- What new skills and knowledge have they gained?
- How do they talk about their learning?
- What assessment practices are being adopted?
- How are trainers assessing recognition of current competency?
- What non-endorsed components are available?

Data collected through this process yielded information about the following:

- professional development needs of trainers in the industry
- delivery issues that arise in following the requirements of the Training Packages
- issues relevant to learners
- issues relevant to managers and administrators

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Methodology

This section provides a description of research strategies and resources used during the project.

Literature review

A literature review was undertaken including familiarisation with training packages and non-endorsed components of the packages.

Consultations with ITABs and RTOs

As part of the initial consultation process the researcher sought to meet with a number of stakeholders involved in either the development or delivery of industry training packages. Training Package delivery was not widespread across training organisations and it was necessary to begin working in an industry with an immediate history of delivery. This broader consultation process yielded important data about training packages, development and delivery issues and policy development which contributed to the overall conceptualisation of the project. Some of these issues will be discussed later in this report.

Informants

Two levels of discussion with informants can be identified in this project. In simple terms informants were divided across management/supervision and teaching/learning sites. Informants came from the following areas:

- Horticulture Training Council of South Australia (Industry ITAB)
- RTO (TAFE SA site) – educational manager, Training Package coordinator, trainers, trainees

Observations of teaching and learning

To understand the teaching and learning experienced during delivery of the Training Packages the researcher observed interaction between one trainer and eleven trainees as they engaged with specific training modules. Observations were undertaken over a period of five weeks. All observations were completed at the RTO site on the day allocated for training.

Questionnaires: trainers and trainees

In addition to half-day observations of training, questionnaires were distributed on the training site to selected trainers involved closely with the units delivered during the observation periods and a cohort of 11 trainees. (See Appendix 1 for questionnaires.)

Interviews with trainers and trainees

Trainees were invited to engage in a guided discussion interview with the researcher. Six trainees participated in 15 minute interviews designed to further enrich the data relevant to the experience of teaching and learning during delivery of Training Packages (Appendix 2). During the five week observation period interviews were also conducted with a trainer and Training Package Coordinator. Weekly discussions took place with the education manager, Training Package coordinator and trainers. Interviews were taped while the weekly discussions were noted and summarised by the researcher.

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Practices, positions and concerns: an analysis of the data

During data collection and analysis it became apparent that three issues framed the experiences of management and delivery of the Training Packages. These issues broadly addressed the following:

- good practice in the delivery and/or assessment of Training Packages
- the literacy and numeracy levels and practices operating at this site
- concerns about access and equity

1. Good practice in the delivery and/or assessment of Training Packages

1.1 The learning environment

In this study both trainees and trainer engaged in a dynamic teaching - learning exchange. There was general agreement amongst the trainees that this 'one day a week' training supported their acquisition of skills, knowledge and understandings for the units under study. Training during this weekly session was described in the following terms by the trainees:

> *tutors are fantastic and very approachable and with strong support for the quality of the teaching.*
> *richness from the trainer is terrific - can't help but learn.*

There was universal support for this training to be delivered away from the work site for two reasons. Firstly this afforded broad possibilities for information exchange in a group of learners from differing work environments, and second, it appeared that there were serious limitations to information exchange in the workplace where supervisors were too busy or lacking effective communication skills.

Trainees portrayed these themes in a number of ways in questionnaire and interview responses. Peer learning was recognised:

> *ideas bounce around the group as an important component of their learning.*

The need for trainees to talk about their learning was emphasised often during data collection:

> *[It] has helped [me] talking to other students and to [the] tutor.*

Learning was facilitated by dialogue exchanges as well as instruction sessions as these comments testify:

> *explanations [are] easier to understand than readings.*
>
> *I do the readings but need to talk through my understandings*

The workplace environment was not considered by this group of learners to be as supportive of their learning as the RTO weekly sessions was encapsulated in the comment

> *[This class] helps me to learn; [I] can't do this in the workplace where the boss [is] too busy.*

Overall the trainees indicate that the allocation of a training day, at a separate site, enables them to prioritise their learning.

1.2   Resourcing the RTO: learning support and learning materials

From the mixed ability of trainees in the observed group it was evident that learning support of one kind or another is a requirement for many individual learners. This expectation is true in any heterogenous group of learners with some learners needing extra support as they develop skills and understandings. Learning support was available on the site in this study, however this may not be the case for all RTOs delivering Training Packages. The trainees recognised that learning was not always immediate:

> *[I] have to do something a few times before it clicks, [this was] a problem at school too.*

Another learner emphasised the need for multiple learning strategies:

> *written work doesn't sink in.*

If the literacy or numeracy expert is not available to seek advice or work with on a collaborative basis then the consequences of unsuccessful outcomes for individual units is a possibility. One trainer in this study believed that 'some trainees are set up for failure' when support is not available.

Learning guides available from the National and State Training Bodies to support the implementation of the Training Packages were acknowledged as important in the challenging implementation process. Because it was still early days in this process, the RTO in this study continued to rely on existing learning materials cited in the 'old' course. One trainer considered this to be a strength for the learning situation, and wondered about the

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broader quality issues in Training Package delivery on new training sites. Another important component of training was having access to a well stocked learning resource centre, which there was at this site.

the library is a great resource. (trainee)

there is an advantage being here because of the facilities. (trainee)

Observations in the teaching/learning exchange emphasised the need for clear learning guides, assessment proforma and text books to enable trainees to achieve satisfactory outcomes for the units under study. Management acknowledged that the non-endorsed components were 'rudimentary at this stage' emphasising the need for the trainers on this site to work with existing materials to support their teaching. It may be that this wealth of existing materials and knowledge of texts could support the further development of the non-endorsed components for the Horticulture Training Package. Trainers working at this site recognised it was resource rich: 'trainees have access to a huge amount' including a learning resource centre, excellent training rooms and electronic resources.

1.3 Assessment practice

Trainer comment suggested that balancing the 'old' curriculum model and the 'new' Training Package model in this evolving system was most problematic when thinking about, and developing assessment practices. It is clear from the structure of the packages that assessing outcomes is key to the rationale behind the Training Packages. 'All forms of training are regarded as valid if outcomes are achieved' (Rural Training Council of Australia, 1999). However a trainer did allude to discomfort about the expectations for both teaching and assessment by asking

Are the underpinning knowledge and skills sufficiently well described for assessment (and teaching) purposes?

The underpinning knowledge and skills are described for individual units in Part B (Evidence Guide) of a unit descriptor. Part B also details the Occupational Health Safety & Welfare (OHS&W) issues that impact upon the performance of this unit.

Apart from using Assessment Guides provided in Unit Descriptors in the Training Package as 'guides' in developing an assessment system, the RTO was working through a range of possibilities for off and on work site assessment for their trainees. As one RTO manager noted, the

assessment practices they were developing were 'not to do with training [but] rather [the] CBT needs of the workplace'.

Assessment of competency assumes prominence in the delivery of Training Packages. As stated in *Succeeding with the Horticulture Training Package* (Rural Training Council of Australia 1999, 13), RTOs not delivering training in a workplace setting need to develop assessment practices which can evaluate 'on the job' skills and practices.

Both the trainer and the Training Package Coordinator in this study talked of the many implementation issues needing attention at this time in the implementation process. Both cited the availability of time as critical as they adapted to the new training model. Time to both apply the new delivery model and to develop assessment practices in alignment with this. Collaboration with other stakeholders was also cited as critical in the evolution of appropriate assessment practices. The RTO management echoed this concern around assessment practice believing that

> *demonstration of competency is not yet trialled and tested.*

1.4 Constructing a qualification: choosing units and articulation

In the 'new paradigm' of training offered by this RTO and ITAB, trainees are given 'control' of the construction of their award.

The 'new paradigm' seems to present a number of dilemmas for trainers and trainees that were resolved in the 'old paradigm' by a more determined curriculum structure and set of delivery arrangements.

To achieve AQF level 3 in the Horticulture Training Package trainees must successfully complete 12 units from a possible 100. The issue of choice was problematic as trainees determined the appropriate 12 units for their specific training:

> *it is hard to choose. We feel as though we should be choosing more because it is good for our learning. (trainee)*

One manager confirmed that this diversity seemed to confuse the issue of successful completion:

> *there is a real issue [for trainees] choosing 12 from a possible 100.*

A number of the trainees in this research expressed an interest in using the Training Packages as a pathway to articulate into further study. The Training Packages, they said, did not allow for enough depth of study. This relates to an appropriate balance of theory and practice in the content of units at AQF level 3. This gap, they considered, was a barrier in allowing them to adequately move along the pathway facilitated through

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the sequence of AQF levels. It seems that there is a need for a more visible part of the Training Package component to allow for a deeper examination of the topic under study.

On the other hand the flexibility of the Training Package model and the broad range of possible study units were described as suitable for a wider range of potential students.

Training Packages are more succinct for more people. (trainee)

This couples with the acknowledgement of the multiple needs in training groups.

people are on different levels. (trainee)

This opinion was corroborated by the industry training body.

Training Packages are good for young kids. Those not making it at school. They do respond to the practical nature of training and RPL/RCC is a bonus.

Articulation arrangements with other education sectors, namely secondary and higher education, were not clear with the introduction of the Training Package model. RTO management highlighted their concern that the wide variability between packages would not assist in promoting articulation with Higher Education. With an assessment only focus (largely) the Training Package model was not considered to be comparable with more rigorous diploma (and higher) awards. The latter awards appear to have more tightly structured agreement between core and elective subjects, providing a more comprehensive course of study and presumably enabling smooth transition into higher AQF levels.

Certainly the issue of managing careers in Agriculture and Horticulture was under scrutiny in the Industry Training Body.

1.5   Quality training

All informants talked about quality training. Trainees were interested from a comparative perspective. As they compared 'notes' with others in their workplaces it was apparent that their training offered a rigour that they didn't consider was happening elsewhere. Their concern is reflected by the Rural Training Council which believes 'a qualification recognises the competence of an individual, not the courses he or she has completed' (Rural Training Council of Australia 1999, 4). The Training Package model involves a shift in thinking around training and instruction. It seems that with a wider number of providers in the training market place,

and an equivalent variety of training methods there is an uneasiness about new training methodologies. The new regime also focuses on the content of the packages themselves. How should the various components of individual units be interpreted? For instance, for one trainer, the possibility of broad interpretations for the Range of Variables cited in a unit which 'define the scope, extent and interpretation of terms and situations referred to in the Performance criteria' (Rural Training Council of Australia 1999, 10) from a unit needed more detailed explanation.

What constitutes Part A in a reasonable and fair qualification? The trainer wanted further clarification.

Further the trainer commented that they were relying on previous teaching to know the 'what' and 'how' of delivery of the body of information contained within units of the Horticulture Training Package. They had concerns about gaps in the unit descriptors.

Are the underpinning knowledge and skills sufficiently well described for assessment and testing purposes? (trainer)

Further issues relating to assessment practice are discussed in 2.3.

From this data it appears that trainers want clarity or a set of assumptions around the performance criteria that are not negotiable for learners at a particular AQF level.

1.6   Professional development and advocacy needs

Staff development was considered critical to a smooth implementation process for the Training Packages. At the RTO site professional development opportunities were provided for all trainers, including information sessions to introduce the Training Package model and guided staff activities to support the implementation process. However, no specific literacy and numeracy training emphasis was provided in the lead up to Training Package implementation or, indeed after implementation. One reason for this could be the presence of a learning support person on the RTO site. Certainly an awareness of the inclusion of literacy and numeracy competencies within the Training Packages existed amongst coordinators, management and trainers.

It is worth mentioning that the ANTA materials available to 'unpack' the literacy and numeracy components of the Training Packages were not known to the RTO (See for example Wignall, nd; McKenna & Wignall, nd; Goulborn and Alexander, nd.) This research project provided professional development opportunities relating to the inclusion of literacy

and numeracy competencies, although it also made additional demands on the educators and managers involved.

The training body emphasised their role in the coordination of all stakeholders in the process of familiarity with, and comfort in, delivery of Training Packages. They provided both advocacy and leadership to encourage industry and RTOs (when not one and the same) to talk with one another to further the facilitation of aspects of the implementation process (i.e. on the job assessments). The training body has managed a range of other professional development activities for registered training organisations. They are currently looking at the issue of Training Packages for VET in schools. Specific leadership and advocacy related to literacy and numeracy issues will be addressed in Section 3 (Access and Equity).

1.7 Working together: collaborating to improve training

Trainees confirmed, in a range of ways, that workplace connections between training and practical application of skills and knowledge were established by the Training Packages. For instance, one trainee commented that:

> *hands on during the week is really important.*

Another confirmed that access to multiple coaches supported their training:

> *having the mentor at work and the instructor here is great.*

As has been described trainees stated that their weekly training was directly transferable to their work situation. One trainee reported that the information from one unit of work enabled him to provide a program for the work site the next day, that was incorporated into the daily activities of his particular site. The manager of the training site acknowledged the 'need to find out what is happening on work sites' in order to strengthen aspects of their delivery, assessment and structure of their training program. The training body emphasised their own role as mediators in involving the key stakeholders and massaging the links between industry, employers, assessors, RTOs, trainers, and trainees.

2. Literacy and numeracy levels

2.1 Literate practices in the learning environment

Observation in one learning environment provided an insight into the literacy and numeracy practices required at AQF level 3 in the Horticulture Training Package. More than functional literacy is required to achieve successful outcomes at this level. The literacy and numeracy requirements at AQF level 3 draw from the indicators of competence, reading, writing, oral communication, learning strategies and numeracy. Data collection for this research project determined that the unit requirements align with levels three and four of the National Reporting System. Literacy requirements within the Horticulture Training Package units for 'treat pests and diseases' and 'control pests and diseases' focus upon a need for oral communication competence at NRS level 4. Reading and writing skills are positioned at level 3 with numerate competence crossing both levels 3 and 4.

Questionnaire responses had trainees group the kinds of literacy and numeracy activities demanded of them in their study. Oral communication competence was emphasised as was the need to read detailed technical material to develop knowledge and understandings. Written demands were predominantly to record information, for record keeping and to respond in written assessment form. Numerate ability was listed as measurement, calibration, calculating quantity, the recording of data alongside arithmetical competence. When asked about preferred learning strategies trainees ordered the ways that their learning was achieved as follows: talking about a topic; doing practical activities; and then equally by watching an expert show you what to do, and reading and writing about the topic.

It was clear by observation in the learning environment that the training was interactive, and structured to engage the learner in the development of skills, knowledge and understandings. The two components of oral communication, speaking and listening, were encouraged as the trainees dialogued with the specific content of the training session. Reading (from the whiteboard and worksheets) and writing (recording information) supported the unit work. From this observation it was possible to think about the delivery of Training Packages and what kind of teaching learning exchange works best to encourage successful outcomes.

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2.2 Literacy and numeracy competencies written into the Training Packages: implicit or explicit?

All stakeholders in the delivery of Training Packages acknowledged the importance of more than functional literacy and numeracy for learners to achieve successful training outcomes. The teaching/learning exchange discussed in Section 2.1, recognises the role of diverse literate practices in the learning environment. Nevertheless trainers considered that the literacy (and numeracy) competencies were not sufficiently described in Training Package units, even though they were essential to sound training.

Literacy and numeracy competence equivalent to the demands of training at the different AQF levels can not be assumed as normative behaviour; the knowledge of, and then instruction for, these practices need to be explicit in the Training Package descriptors. As suggested by one trainer, this gap exists in the Evidence Guide (part B of the Training Package Unit) which details the underpinning skills and knowledge. Reference to appropriate literacy and numeracy competence (aligned to National Reporting System indicators) may need to be explicit. Oral communication skills (2.1, 2.3) were listed as important in trainee interview and questionnaire responses.

National Reporting System performance indicators could be included in Training Package unit descriptors. To develop examples of descriptors from the NRS there are three indicators of competence for oral communication at NRS level 4:

> *4.6 Participates in sustained transactions with flexible use of a range of generic structures, for the purpose of exchanging or obtaining goods or services: or gathering/providing information.*
>
> *4.7 Takes part in sustained interpersonal exchanges, demonstrating flexible use of register and a range of interactional strategies, for the purpose of establishing, maintaining and developing relationships: exploring issues; or problem solving.*
>
> *4.8 Extracts main ideas and most details from sustained oral texts [Coates et al., 1994].*

If this information is to be referenced within Training Package unit descriptors, trainers would be supported in their understanding of delivery for these skills.

2.3 Communicative competence

Reference has been made in this report (2.1, 2.2) to the importance of oral communication skills in classroom interactions. Communicative competence is valued within the framework of the Horticulture Training Package. The Horticulture Training Package places emphasis on effective and efficient horticultural practices alongside the employment of sound interpersonal skills. Customer service, workplace communications and working as a team are deemed critical areas of training (Rural Training Council of Australia 1999, 6).

Observation in the learning environment confirmed the dominance of oral communication skills. Talking through learning was cited as crucial to understanding concepts and transferring information. There does however, appear to be a gap in the described components of Training Package units, which does not account for the cited NRS indicators of competence, even though they are acknowledged as part of the intent of the Horticulture Training Package.

One key reference for trainers implementing Horticulture Training Packages, *Succeeding with the Horticulture Training Package* (Rural Training Council of Australia, 1999) makes no reference to literacy and numeracy competencies. However there is implicit reference to oral communication skills, or what can be considered to be communicative competence as the underlying agenda for the Horticulture Training Packages.

2.4 Assessment practice

The RTO training staff considered there was more work to be done in their framing of assessments for on the job competencies. Assessment practice for units, which parallel modules from the 'old' system, will be adapted where possible by the trainers in this organisation. The assessment implications for the inclusion of literacy and numeracy competence are still at a preliminary stage because much of the staff effort is currently focussed on the broad implementation of Training Packages, without attending specifically to the inclusion of literacy and numeracy competencies. The organisation had not yet made use of the ANTA information kit *A New Assessment Tool* (Goulborn, and Alexander, no date) for assessors and workplace trainers on incorporating language, literacy and numeracy skills into Training Packages.

This training body is concerned that a lack of initial assessment processes will open the possibility for too many learners failing to achieve

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competency at AQF level 1. Their concern underlies the need for support of learners at this point in their studies rather than exclusion from further training because of literacy and numeracy deficits. This area of high need was illustrated in the example of a training course where 7 out of 13 did not complete because of language and literacy problems.

2.5   Resources

There is a strong need for a variety of non-endorsed resources to assist trainers in their delivery. The RTO in this study has continued to rely upon existing resources which they refer to as the 'old' system. If suitable resources from the 'old paradigm' do exist and trainers are unaware of their availability, this has implications for effective and efficient delivery practices.

Although there is a range of material available for trainers in the form of curriculum materials, implementation guides, and some resource materials to assist trainers as they move to the Training Package model of delivery, it has been said by managers that:

people often need to be led and encouraged to look.

Managers have also mentioned that:

a more active marketing approach to getting information out to the practitioners could help.

2.6   Professional development/leadership

A series of questions about literacy and numeracy, and literate and numerate practices in Training Package delivery, derive from discussions with trainers in the RTO. What is literacy? What is numeracy? What literate practices need explicit teaching? How should this learning be achieved and who should do this teaching? Where are the gaps in literate practice for individual trainees and the training group as a whole? These questions point to the need for an awareness of literacy and numeracy issues in the training environment. Staff development addressing literacy and numeracy inclusion in Training Packages is important in order for trainers to facilitate this inclusion in their instruction. There is a need to take advantage of the range of resources available through ANTA information kits developed to consider inclusion of literacy and numeracy competency issues. Many trainers are not aware of these materials suggesting the need for broader dissemination.

It seems that issues specific to literacy and numeracy inclusion in

the Training Packages have been marginal to the implementation process to date.

> *The packages are so new and all the emphasis is on delivery not on literacy and numeracy. (training body)*

Recognition of both

> *a) time and funding to facilitate the training of trainers, and*
> *b) the ordering of priority for professional development activities*
> *has been made by RTO managers and the industry training body.*

Certainly these issues were still being worked out by managers and industry training bodies.

3. Access and equity

The Training Package model makes an immediate connection between work and training. On-the-job competencies assume a central role in this training culture. Such an interdependency of work and training acts to inhibit training opportunities for some people and to restrict training/educational choices for others.

Throughout Section 1 (Good practice in the delivery and/or assessment of Training packages) and Section 2 (Literacy and numeracy levels) issues of access and equity prevail. Further points to be made, however, relate to

3.1   Access to training
3.2   Funding
3.3   Isolation

3.1   Access to training

All informants expressed strong concerns about the lack of availability of training for potential trainees without a work context or contract of training. Some trainees within the study were self-funded and this limited the possibility of choosing a wide number of units to study. As one trainee noted,

> *[I] can't pay for too many extra modules even if I want to do them.*

Training for unemployed people is not funded although as the RTO manager stated, the *opportunity* to actually develop skills is a 'training need' if one wants to obtain work in the horticulture industry.

The RTO, as a public provider, has previously offered training to

those wanting to start a career in the industry. Under the new system the limited access to a workplace or a contract of training means access to Training Package delivery is not available to all potential trainees and the RTO is aware of this:

> *Those with a job can get the full qualification. Those without cannot. Training is available to the employed as trainees/apprentices. Training is not funded without a contract of training. (manager)*

The training model developed using Training Packages is inextricably linked with the work place. Because of this there are students within the VET system who are precluded from access to Training Package delivery. They include:

- the unemployed
- school leavers who want a qualification before seeking work
- employed persons wanting a career change

The Training Package model of delivery, while opening stronger links between workplace and training sites, has potential and actual equity gaps.

3.2 Funding

Funding concerns are perennial in the data. These relate to access for particular groups (3.1) and to professional development issues. Because literacy and numeracy competencies are included in Training Packages dedicated funding is not available to address the issue of literacy and numeracy support for the more vulnerable trainees.

> *Where trainees are paying for a course and have low level literacy skills they may not be successful because of this literacy deficit. (training body)*

The integration of literacy and numeracy competencies into Training Packages has in many ways rendered them invisible, both in the context of teaching and as a focus for support funding. Support programs for lower level literacy and numeracy in VET programs are not available under current funding arrangements.

It seems that the active direction of funds into an infrastructure to support Training Packages delivery has not fully recognised these needs. Support for 'at risk' trainees is an access and equity issue. The supported development of good instruction practice is equally important to provide the possibility of successful outcomes for all trainees. From the data in

this study it would appear that increased funding to support trainees and to develop good practice in delivery is necessary.

3.3 Isolation

The question of how to bridge the spatial gap between work sites and training delivery can be problematic for the agricultural industry. Two issues of access and equity for regional trainees surfaced in this research. Access to training for those in regional locations is the first. The training body project officer stated in an interview, that rural people want training to be accessible for their children without them needing to leave home. The second concerns the possibility of providing vocational delivery in regional centres, taking into consideration the inclusion of literacy and numeracy competencies is currently on the agenda for the Agriculture and Horticulture Council of South Australia.

Two measures are being introduced in an attempt to overcome these problems. One is the possibility of farm care units to be offered online for greater accessibility. The Agriculture and Horticulture Council in South Australia is currently looking at online delivery possibilities. The other involves the introduction of volunteer tutor training schemes to provide support for trainees in terms of their literacy and numeracy competencies. Collaboration between the Agriculture and Horticulture Council and the Adult and Community Education Council in South Australia may support this provision.

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Project outcomes

The research findings drawn from a number of levels across this ITAB/RTO training collaboration confirm that Training Package delivery is a significant systems change. Moreover such a systems change involves detailed and ongoing consideration at each of the following designated points:

- program planning and preparation for the use of Training Packages in industry training
- delivery with respect to maintenance of standards in the delivery of Training Packages
- professional development opportunities including ongoing support for coordinators and instructors in the use of Training Packages

28.

Research findings

1. Staff development to increase an awareness of literacy and numeracy training issues and needs.

Although ANTA has developed and disseminated literacy and numeracy information kits, there was not widespread use of these materials at the site where this research was undertaken. It is probable that RTOs have access to them where there is a strong link with literacy experts. This was not evidenced in this study.

2. The visibility of the literacy and numeracy competencies in Training Packages

It is apparent that literacy and numeracy competencies are buried in the Training Packages. The Training Package coordinator, RTO manager and trainer in this study would like to see broader performance criteria in the range statements and evidence guides for Training Package units of competence. Specifically the wording needs to denote clearly the appropriate literacy and numeracy competencies required to gain competency in individual units.

At present individual trainers design their instruction using Section D, Key Competencies, from the unit descriptor to include literacy and numeracy competencies into their training. However, this strategy is not always sufficient. Experienced trainers integrate the old curriculum model literacy and numeracy competencies in their planing for Training Package delivery. While adapting the curriculum model to Training Package instruction may be appropriate for experienced trainers, it is clear that there are gaps in Training Package unit descriptors in relation to the inclusion of literacy and numeracy competencies. These gaps need to be addressed.

3. Availability of learning support across the training continuum

Evidence throughout this study shows that poor literacy and numeracy skills may inhibit the successful completion of Training Package units, particularly at AQF levels 1, 2 and 3. Learning support for 'at risk' learners would promote successful outcomes for these trainees.

The Horticulture Training Package places emphasis on effective and

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efficient horticulture practices alongside the employment of sound interpersonal skills. Customer service, workplace communications and working as a team are deemed critical areas of training (Rural Council of Australia 1999). Models for instruction in the form of workshop programs, video presentations and written texts should complement a growing number of non-endorsed components to support Training Package delivery.

4. Articulation arrangements with higher education

This study has isolated a number of issues which relate to the articulation of industry qualifications. These are:

a)   the need for a broader understanding of Training Packages across the training and education sectors

b)   repeated concerns highlighting the lack of rigour in Training Package units which construct certificates and diploma awards.

Training reform changes over the past decade aim to promote a seamless transfer of credit points from one award to the next in the education and training sector. However, the Training Package model places importance on a Statement of Attainment which provides a competency profile for individual trainees. Each unit in the Horticulture Training package 'attracts a point value commensurate with its AQF level' (Rural Training Council of Australia 1999, 12). Qualifications are awarded when the points gained equate with the number needed for a specific award. There does seem to be a contradiction between gaining a qualification over the acquisition of Statements of Attainment. This is problematic in conceptualising the Training Package model in relation to pathways in education and training.

Both concerns suggest the need for clearly mapped and supported pathways from AQF certificates to diploma and degreed courses.

5. Strengthening assessment practice to support the intent of the Training Package model, involving close collaboration between all stakeholders.

Units of competence in Training Packages are focused on outcomes. This emphasis requires the employment of multiple practices that take account of individual learners and learning styles. The integration of literacy and numeracy elements in assessment practice is currently at a preliminary

stage. A New Assessment Tool (Goulborn & Alexander, n.d.) is one resource available to facilitate staff awareness and understanding of assessments issues and practices within this training model. An acknowledgment and need to strengthen links between trainers, workplace assessors and work sites exists and is evolving as this training model becomes more robust.

6. Quality control and the moderation of training

Ideally the issue of quality control, the provision of an excellent training service, is the goal of every RTO. The proof of training success will be in the attainment of successful Training Package outcomes. However guidance as to the interpretation and delivery of Training Packages is a stated need. The key elements of good teaching/coaching need to be made explicit as a broader group of trainers are involved in the delivery of Training Package units. This study has observed an example of sound practice in the teaching-learning exchange and would recommend that exemplars of such instruction form the basis of staff development.

7. Institutional pathways

The training model described in this study is inextricably linked with the work place and therefore some students within the VET system are precluded from access to Training Package delivery. They include:
- the unemployed
- school leavers who want a qualification before seeking work
- employed persons wanting a career change

This gap in access to Training Package training could be avoided by developing and accrediting pre-employment courses to be offered by private and public providers. Initiatives to link literacy and numeracy competencies to pre-vocational literacy courses with Training Packages competencies are being considered by individuals delivering literacy programs for the unemployed and more formally, particularly in TAFE (SA).

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Recommendations in summary

Recommendations resulting from the seven research findings can be grouped within the three designated areas of interest for this study.

1. Good Practice in the delivery and/or assessment of Training Packages

1.1 The development and maintenance of good assessment practice

- Wider dissemination of the ANTA/DEETYA resource materials available to assist with the incorporation of literacy and numeracy skills, and the building of capacity in construction of assessment tools for assessing Training Package competencies.
- Development of exemplars for good assessment practice to be available within RTO and industry settings.

1.2 The development and maintenance of quality Training Package delivery

- Development and dissemination of exemplars of good practice to assist trainers and coordinators to plan for Training Package delivery at program and session levels.
- Ongoing development of resources to assist in the interpretation of Training Package units of competence (for example, instruction guides, video and online materials) as well as workshops.

2. Literacy and numeracy levels and practices in delivery

2.1 Visibility of literacy and numeracy competencies in Training Packages

- Provision of broader performance criteria for literacy/numeracy competence in the Range Statements and Evidence Guides of Training Package units of competence.
- Maintenance of close links with state and national literacy/numeracy experts. ITAB officers to facilitate these

connections through representation on working party and Training Package development groups.

2.2 The provision of learning support for trainees

Learning support to be acknowledged in the budgetary arrangements for Training Package delivery and take account of the following:

- The literacy/numeracy expert working with 'at risk' trainees to support their learning.
- Staff training to develop an awareness of appropriate instruction strategies to support 'at risk' trainees.

2.3 The provision of professional development and support for trainers

- Workshop opportunities for industry trainers with VET literacy and numeracy experts to understand the implications of the inclusion of literacy and numeracy competencies in Training Package delivery.
- Wider dissemination of the DETYA/ANTA information kits developed to assist persons involved in the implementation of Training Packages understand the issues associated with the inclusion of literacy and numeracy competencies in Training Packages.

3. Access and Equity as they relate to planning and programming for Training Package delivery

3.1 Supporting articulation across the Australian Qualifications Framework

There is a need for a broader understanding of Training Packages across the training and education sectors. It is suggested that one way to approach the cultural shift that has taken place with the introduction of Training Packages is to provide clearly mapped and supported pathways for AQF certificates to diploma and degreed courses.

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3.2 Strengthening institutional pathways into Training Package programs

- Provision of pre-employment courses to bridge unemployed persons into Training Package units in an area of work interest.

- Developing links with pre-vocational literacy/numeracy programs designed for people wanting to access vocational programs but without a work contract.

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Closing remarks

This study has provided an opportunity to understand the conversation that is happening about Training Package delivery at the point of delivery.

It includes the voices of the Training Package coordinators and managers, those who deliver training and those who receive instruction. The planning, examining, programming and instruction stages of the implementation of Training Packages reveal the possibilities and problems associated with the move to the Training Package model. The voices in this report provide an understanding of the shift in industry training from the curriculum model to the Training Package model as it is experienced in one RTO. The evolution of this process has been captured in this study. Recommendations to facilitate the process are tabled.

Further, it is suggested that the new ways for 'doing training' will only develop in a climate that encourages ongoing questioning about practice. Trainers, managers and trainees statements about the move from the 'old' to the 'new system' reveal a number of uncertainties about practice. The recommendations in this report suggest that this uncertainty can only be addressed by dealing with a number of levels of practice, including wide dissemination of materials, revised budgetary considerations and stronger, more transparent links to other training courses.

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Rural Training Council of Australia (Industry Training Packages, TP review, Learning Resources, Assessment Guides, Curriculum Mapping, Competency Standards)

Appendix 1 – Interview questions

The following questions provided a framework for a guided discussion with trainees in the research group study.

1. What do you have to **listen** to and **understand**?
    Training
    Work
    How does one help the other?

2. What do you have to **say**?
    Training
    Work
    How does the study help in the work situation?

3. What do you have to **read**?
    Training
    Work
    How does the study help in the work situation?

4. What do you have to **write**?
    Training
    Work
    How does the study help in the work situation?

5. Do you need to understand any diagrams, pictures or symbols?

6. What maths calculations do you have to do?

7. Comments about   **assessment**
    time in study
    study and work supporting each other
    anything else

Appendix 2 – Student Questionnaire

Horticulture Training Packages **October 1999**

The first group of questions are about your current training and work in the horticultural industry.

1. Are you working in the horticulture industry at present?

    ☐ Yes at _____

    ☐ No

2. If No, are you in a work experience or traineeship situation?
    Give details.

    _____

    _____

3. How much study/training are you doing at present? (Please state the modules and time involved)

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

3. How long have you been studying as a necessary part of your work in the horticulture industry or to qualify you for work in this industry?

    _____

    _____

    _____

4. How did you decide upon the right modules for your current or future work needs?

    ☐ Self selection

    ☐ With the help of friend or family

    ☐ With the help of employer

    ☐ With the help of training provider

5. How soon before you will have a qualification in the Horticulture Industry?

    _____

    _____

The following questions will help me to build a picture of the reading, writing, speaking and listening activities that are part of your study in the current modules

Reading

1. Is there much reading involved in this study?
    (Please mark along this continuum)

    Not much_____ Enough _____ Too much _____

2. Does this reading help you to learn what is needed to develop the necessary skills, knoledge and understandings?. *(please tick)*
    - [ ] Never
    - [ ] Sometimes
    - [ ] Often
    - [ ] Always

3. What reading do you need to do in this study?
    - [ ] Course books
    - [ ] Course notes
    - [ ] Whiteboard information
    - [ ] Own notes
    - [ ] Labels
    - [ ] Text books

    Other *(please state)* _____

4. Does the course reading help you with training or work tasks?
    - [ ] Never
    - [ ] Sometimes
    - [ ] Often
    - [ ] Always

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Writing

1. How much writing is involved in this study?

    (Please mark along this continuum)

    Not much _____ Enough _____ Too much _____

2. Does this writing help you to learn what is needed to develop the necessary skills, knowledge and understandings? *(please tick)*

    ☐ Never

    ☐ Sometimes

    ☐ Often

    ☐ Always

3. What writing do you need to do in this study? *(please tick)*

    ☐ Own notes

    ☐ Record sheets

    ☐ Assignments

    ☐ Labels

    ☐ Text books

    Other *(please state)* _____

4. Does the course writing help you with training or work tasks?

    ☐ Never

    ☐ Sometimes

    ☐ Often

    ☐ Always

Oral Communication (speaking & listening)

1.   How much oral communication involved in this study?
     (Please mark along this continuum)

     Not much _____   Enough _____   Too much _____

2.   Does this oral communication help you to learn what is needed to
     develop the necessary skills, knowledge and understandings?
     (please tick)

     ☐   Never
     ☐   Sometimes
     ☐   Often
     ☐   Always

3.   How do you engage listening skills as part of this study? *(please tick)*

     ☐   Teacher talk
     ☐   Peer talk
     ☐   Asking questions
     ☐   Explaining points
     ☐   Discussions in groups

     Other *(please state)* _____

4.   How do you engage speaking skills as part of this study?

     ☐   Asking questions
     ☐   Explaining points
     ☐   Discussion in groups

     Other *(please state)* _____

5.   Is the oral communication component of the course helpful to you
     with training or work tasks?

     ☐   Never
     ☐   Sometimes
     ☐   Often
     ☐   Always

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Mathematical Ideas & Techniques

1. Does this writing help you to learn what is needed to develop the necessary skills, knowledge and understandings? *(please tick)*

    ☐ Never

    ☐ Sometimes

    ☐ Often

    ☐ Always

2. What mathematical ideas and techniques are part of this study? __ *(please tick)*

    ☐ Measurement

    ☐ Calibration

    ☐ Arithmetic

    ☐ Calculating quantity

    ☐ Recording data

    Other *(please state)* _____

3. Does the course mathematical ideas and techniques help you with training or work tasks?

    ☐ Never

    ☐ Sometimes

    ☐ Often

    ☐ Always

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The final group of questions is about your preferred learning style (how you best learn).

1. Would you describe your preferred style as
    (tick which ever one is applicable, you may choose more than one)

    ☐ Talking about the topic

    ☐ Reading & writing about the topic

    ☐ Watching an expert show you what to do

    ☐ Doing practical activities by yourself or with others

2. Does this training help in your skills development for the horticulture industry?

    ☐ Never

    ☐ Sometimes

    ☐ Often

    ☐ Always

2. Have you been able to apply for recognition of prior learning (RPL) or recognition of current competency (RCC)?

    ☐ Yes

    ☐ No

4. Was your application for either RPL or RCC successful?

    ☐ Yes

    ☐ No

5. Is there further comment you would like to add about any aspect of your training?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

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Appendix 3 – Staff Questionnaire

November 1999

The purpose of this questionnaire is to build a picture of the effectiveness of the integration of literacy and numeracy competencies into Training Packages.
There are two broad areas of interest:
- *A description of the delivery of Training Package modules and*
- *A critique of this new system of delivery.*
Throughout, your responses will need to be alert to both gaps & possibilities in the 'new regime'. Thank you for your time.

1. When did you commence your delivery of Industry Training Packages?

   _____

2. What Training Packages have you delivered to date?

   UNIT CODE   UNIT NAME

   _____   _____

   _____   _____

   _____   _____

   _____   _____

   _____   _____

3. What non-endorsed components are you using in your teaching? Please list.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

Professional development

4.   What staff/professional development activities were made available
      to you in preparation for your implementation of the Training
      Packages?

_____

_____

_____

_____

5.   If staff development was available to you please state what
      organisation(s) was/were responsible for this professional
      development.

_____

_____

_____

6.   If the staff development was available to you, was there a
      component included which addressed the implementation of literacy
      and numeracy competencies into Training Packages?

      ☐ Yes

      ☐ No

      If yes, please provide details.

_____

_____

_____

_____

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Assessment

7. What methodologies do you use to gather evidence for assessment of the competencies achieved in Training Package modules.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. Have you changed or modified your assessment practices with the introduction of the Training Packages?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please provide details.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. Do you use assessment materials provided to support the industry assessment guidelines?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please provide details.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Communication and literacy/numeracy skills

Do the Training Packages allow for adequate development or consolidation of on the job communication skills? (respond below in question 10)

This might be in regard to:

- *Face-to-face communication individuals or groups engaging appropriate speaking and listening skills*
- *Communicating using:*
  - *Telephones & mobile phones*
  - *Fax machines*
  - *Two way radios*
  - *Paging systems*
  - *Computer e-mail*

10. Please comment about the efficiency of the Training Packages in promoting the development of students' communication skills.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Literacy and numeracy components include the skills of:

- *Reading*
- *Writing*
- *Speaking*
- *Listening*
- *Critical Thinking*
- *Numeracy (mathematical ideas and techniques)*

11. What particular literacy and numeracy requirements do you consider to be essential in gaining competence in the modules you teach?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. Are you familiar with the ANTA information kits relating to literacy and numeracy integration into Training Packages? (please circle yes or no as appropriate)

☐ Yes ☐ No *Built In Not Bolted On*

☐ Yes ☐ No *Ten Fold Returns*

☐ Yes ☐ No *A New Assessment Tool – professional development kit for Trainers and Assessors*

☐ Yes ☐ No *The National Reporting System*

Other (*please specify*)

_____

_____

_____

13. Please record **some** of the ways that these literacy and numeracy macroskills are employed as students gain competence in the modules you teach?

13a. **Reading**

Activity (please add)	Comments relevant changes brought about by the introduction of Training Packages
Course books	
Course notes	
Whiteboard information	
Labels	
OH & S notices/information	

Please add any further comments.

_____

_____

_____

_____

13b. **Writing**

Activity (please add)	Comments relevant changes brought about by the introduction of Training Packages
Trainees own notes	
Records sheets	
Assignments	

Further comments.

13c. **Oral Communication – Speaking & Listening**

Activity (please add)	Comments relevant changes brought about by the introduction of Training Packages
Peer talk	
Teacher talk	
Asking questions	
Explaining points	
Discussion in groups	

Further comments.

13d. **Critical Thinking**

Activity (please add) Problem solving	Comments relevant changes brought about by the introduction of Training Packages

Further comments.

_____

_____

_____

_____

13e. **Mathematical Ideas & Techniques**

Activity (please add) Measurement	Comments relevant changes brought about by the introduction of Training Packages
Calibration	
Arithmetic	
Recording data numerically	

Further comments.

_____

_____

_____

_____

14.   What are the major differences (if any) between curriculum based
      teaching and using the Training Packages?

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

15.   Is there anything else you would like to add to broaden this
      snapshot of the integration of literacy and numeracy competencies
      in Training Packages?

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

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